



Long Beach

**Livable
Places
Profile**

Few cities
have faced
the challenges
and trials of
and shown its
resilience and
capacity to
quickly recover
in a renaissance
of opportunity.

June 1998



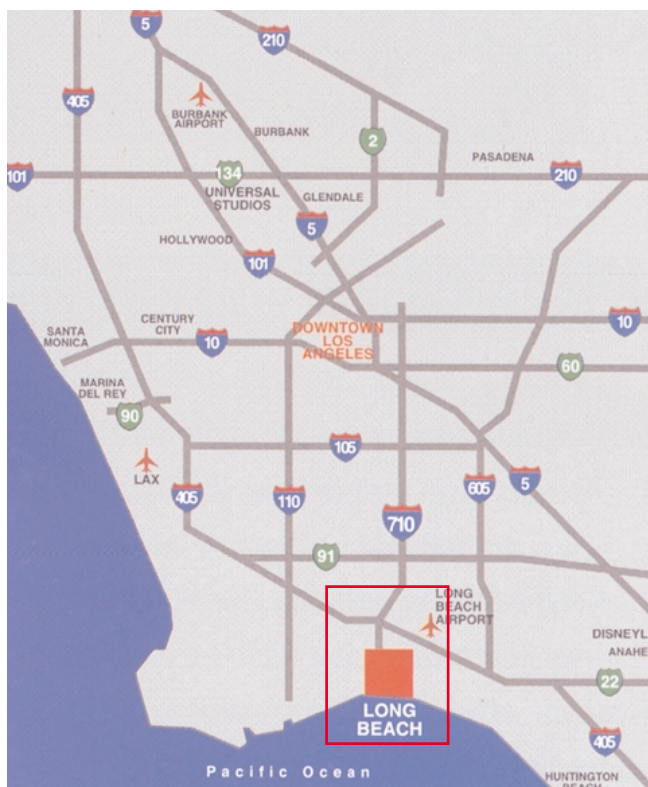
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

A Showcase for Livability

Sponsored by the **H.U.D. and D.O.T. Community and Transportation Revitalization Demonstration** program, the goal of this profile is to demonstrate how cities and their regions can undertake an **integrated planning process to implement transportation, housing, and community development initiatives leading to quality of life and environmental benefits.** The City of Long Beach is one of six cities in the nation selected for this demonstration.

Long Beach is a demographically diverse coastal City of about half a million people, located next to the harbors of Long Beach and Los Angeles in the San Pedro Bay, and adjacent to Orange County. The City has a long and colorful history with many architecturally significant buildings in its Downtown district. Over time, Long Beach has experienced booming growth, as well as recession and decline. While it has seen more bad times than good over the last decade, the City is currently undergoing a remarkable renaissance that is a showcase for communities across the country in the methods for self-renewal.

The City's assets are many: *a centralized coastal location, a pleasant climate, abundant recreational opportunities, many historically unique structures, superior regional transportation access, and a modern City-owned port that handles one of the highest volumes of international trade in the world.*



Regional Map

In the recent past, the City's troubled Downtown, a "skid row" and locale for off-duty military entertainment, had the classic signs of decline. Twenty years of community development and redevelopment efforts resulted in substantial economic improvements, only to be unravelled by the economic recession of the early 1990's, rivaled only by the Great Depression. Then, as the economy began to recover, Long Beach experienced significant military and aerospace industry downsizing. This caused the loss of 30,000 jobs at McDonnell Douglas and closure of the Long Beach Naval Station, Hospital and military housing, as well as the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

Fortunately, the City had in place an economic recovery strategy for converting from its largely defense-based economy to one that capitalized on its **inherent assets.** Leaders stepped forward to turn the City around by leveraging these assets. The City was thus poised to take advantage of Southern California's unfolding economic recovery.



Long Beach Grand Prix



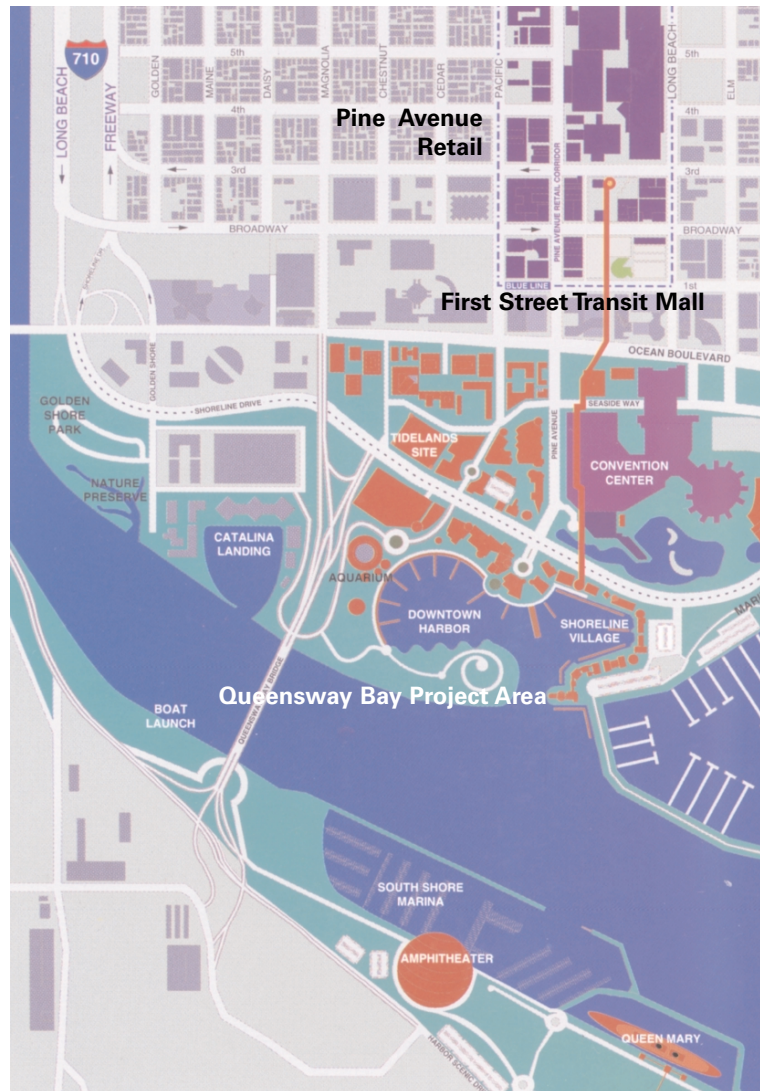
Long Beach Convention Center



Port of Long Beach

ery--which has now caught up to the rest of the country and is, in fact, leading the nation in some important sectors. Long Beach prepared itself to capitalize on three of the region's burgeoning economic sectors: **international trade, advanced technologies, and tourism.**

The rapid succession of economic distress factors suffered by Long Beach would have sent most



Downtown Long Beach Features

cities into long-term atrophy. The City's renaissance, now nationally recognized, was led by a number of important new investments such as the World Trade Center, world class hotels, and expanded convention facilities. Distressed retail areas have become entertainment hubs with cinemas, restaurants, and national retailers complementing revitalized local entrepreneurs. New tourist and entertainment facilities are under construction, including a world-class aquarium that is the centerpiece of a major waterfront development project called Queensway Bay.

*This profile will highlight three major projects that are pivotal to the continued renewal and recovery of Long Beach: **the First Street Transit Mall, Pine Avenue, and the Queensway Bay Project.** The First Street Transit Mall has largely been completed, Pine Avenue is in a continuing state of development, and Queensway Bay is still under construction.*

First Street Transit Mall

History: The City of Long Beach has a long history of public transportation. A landmark year was 1902, when the “Red Cars”—an electric interurban transit system—opened to connect Long Beach and Los Angeles. At a top speed of ten miles per hour, the Red Line attracted visitors to Long Beach’s seaside attractions--The Pike Amusement Park and The Plunge Bath House--providing Long Beach with a national identity as the **“Coney Island of the West.”**

After several decades of expansion, the emerging popularity of the automobile led to ridership declines on private rail and bus lines. Eventually, private rail operations were discontinued and Long Beach residents voted to purchase and operate the bus system. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the non-profit Long Beach Transit was noted for its **progressive policies**, becoming the first major bus system to offer service to the disabled.

During this period, the City’s Downtown deteriorated. In 1978, a federal study found Long Beach to be among the most socially, economically and financially distressed cities in the country. In response to that finding, and to the City’s own **1978 Downtown Plan**, which included a comprehensive redevelopment component, Long Beach received a combination of federal grants for a multi-modal transportation project. Along with \$14 million in federal funds came \$8 million in

state and local monies to support the construction of a state-of-the art Downtown transit and pedestrian mall, completed in 1982.

Context: The Downtown Transit Mall, located on First Street between Long Beach Boulevard and Pacific Avenue, is exclusively devoted to public transit. The Transit Mall offers passenger shelters, computerized information monitors, and a transit service center. A key nexus for light rail trains, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians, the Transit Mall provides regional intermodal transportation access to Downtown. Buses from Long Beach Transit, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA), and the Orange County Transportation Authority offer service at the Transit Mall.

The **Transit Mall is a focal point of a 23-block Downtown Redevelopment Area** that includes the Central Business District, the Pine Avenue Historic Retail District, the Downtown Plaza Regional Shopping Mall, the Promenade, the newly expanded Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, and the Queensway Bay Project. Pedestrian activity is enhanced in Downtown area by expansive sidewalks, streetscape improvements, including decorative street fixtures, and coordinated landscaping with shaded rest areas.



Located at the Long Beach terminus of the Blue Line, it is a transit nexus for light rail, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians and is the focal point of the Downtown Promenade Redevelopment Project.

Transit Service: In 1990, the MTA's first light rail train began operating between Long Beach and Downtown Los Angeles. Called the **Blue Line**, this centerpiece of the transit system terminates with a loop configuration at the Transit Mall. In 1991, the City responded to Downtown congestion by establishing a shuttle service called the **"Runabout."** As the Runabout service grew to attract and maintain patrons, the City further promoted use by subsidizing free fares in the Downtown area. Far surpassing expectations, the Runabout carried about two million customers in 1997.

Environmental Benefits: The Transit Mall exemplifies the successful environmental benefits that result from a **seamless intermodal connection** between high-occupancy transit systems and non-polluting pedestrians and bicycles. These environmental benefits are reinforced by coordinated and compatible land use planning within the Downtown Redevelopment Area. Redevelopment plans promote mixed-use development in the vicinity of the Transit Mall including the conversion of former commercial buildings to loft apartments, and the provision of live-work space for artists and artisans in the nearby East Village Community. This is conducive to transit use, walking and bicycling to work, shopping, and other activities.

Locating housing, jobs, and commercial uses close to the Transit Mall contributes to the livability of both the local community and the region as a whole, and establishes a sense of community identity and pride.

Economic Benefits: The Transit Mall provides an economic benefit for Long Beach by offering convenient access to City attractions for regional and international visitors and tourists alike. Twenty-eight percent of all visitors to Long Beach are first-time international tourists, the most of any city in Los Angeles County. This percentage should increase with the completion of the Pine Avenue and Queensway Bay developments, and other plans for the Downtown area.

Visitors to Long Beach arriving at Los Angeles International Airport can board a 10-minute shuttle to the Green Line and then transfer to the Blue Line heading directly for the Long Beach Transit Mall. The trip takes about an hour. Visitors can continue from the Transit Mall to various Long Beach attractions using the Runabout, transit buses, bicycles, and walking. In the near future, they will be able to ferry across Queensway Bay to the Queen Mary. As a tourist destination, **Long Beach provides an enriching experience for visitors** who want to avoid the stress of driving on congested streets during their leisure hours.



Information kiosk and bus stop amenities on the First Street Transit Mall

N.M.T. spells . . .



Farmers' Market on the Promenade

Non-Motorized Transportation, or **N . M . T .**, simply means pedestrians, bikes, and other non-emitting conveyances. Communities with safe and well-developed **N . M . T .** systems linked to transit and pedestrian-oriented land uses contribute to livability.

The Promenade in Downtown Long Beach is a three-block long pedestrian feature. It connects the Long Beach Shopping Plaza with the Shoreline Village specialty retail center.

The Promenade and the adjacent amphitheater and Bikestation provide a forum for special events such as bike festivals, farmer's market, and concerts, among others.

The Promenade works in close harmony with the First Street Transit Mall, the Bikestation, and the pedestrian-oriented developments along nearby Pine Avenue to enhance livability for people City-wide.

The strategic placement of well-designed pedestrian facilities and complementary landscape design in the Downtown area encourages walking, and supports Downtown businesses and attractions.



Aerial view of the Promenade



Streetscape amenities on the Promenade

... *Livability!*



Valet bicycle parking facilities



Bicycle festival begins at Bikestation



Snack bar and outdoor dining at Bikestation

In March 1996, the Long Beach Bikestation became the nation's first full-service public facility to offer services for commuting cyclists and recreational riders.

Modeled after stations in Europe and Japan, Bikestation provides free bicycle parking in a guarded area; bike rentals; gear and accessories; repairs; a changing room and a restroom; and an outdoor café. Route-planning assistance and free classes are offered in bicycle maintenance, safety, and training. These amenities facilitate non-polluting access to transit services for commuters. The variety of rental bicycles, including electric bikes, encourages the use of 33 miles of scenic shoreline and river bikepaths, and provides convenient bicycle access throughout the Downtown area.

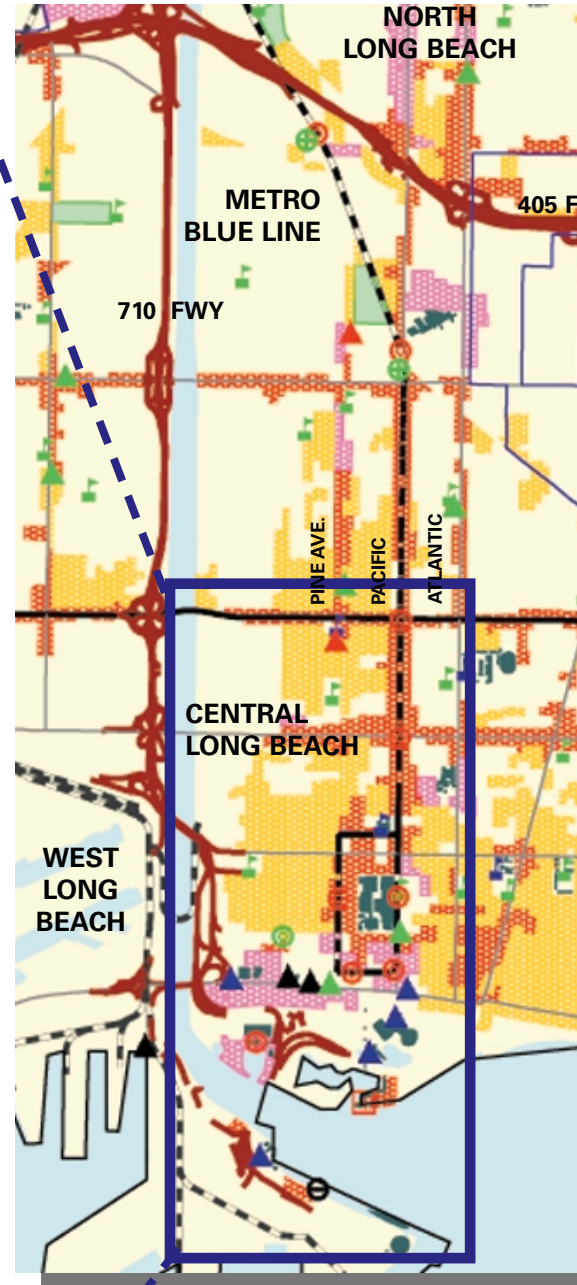
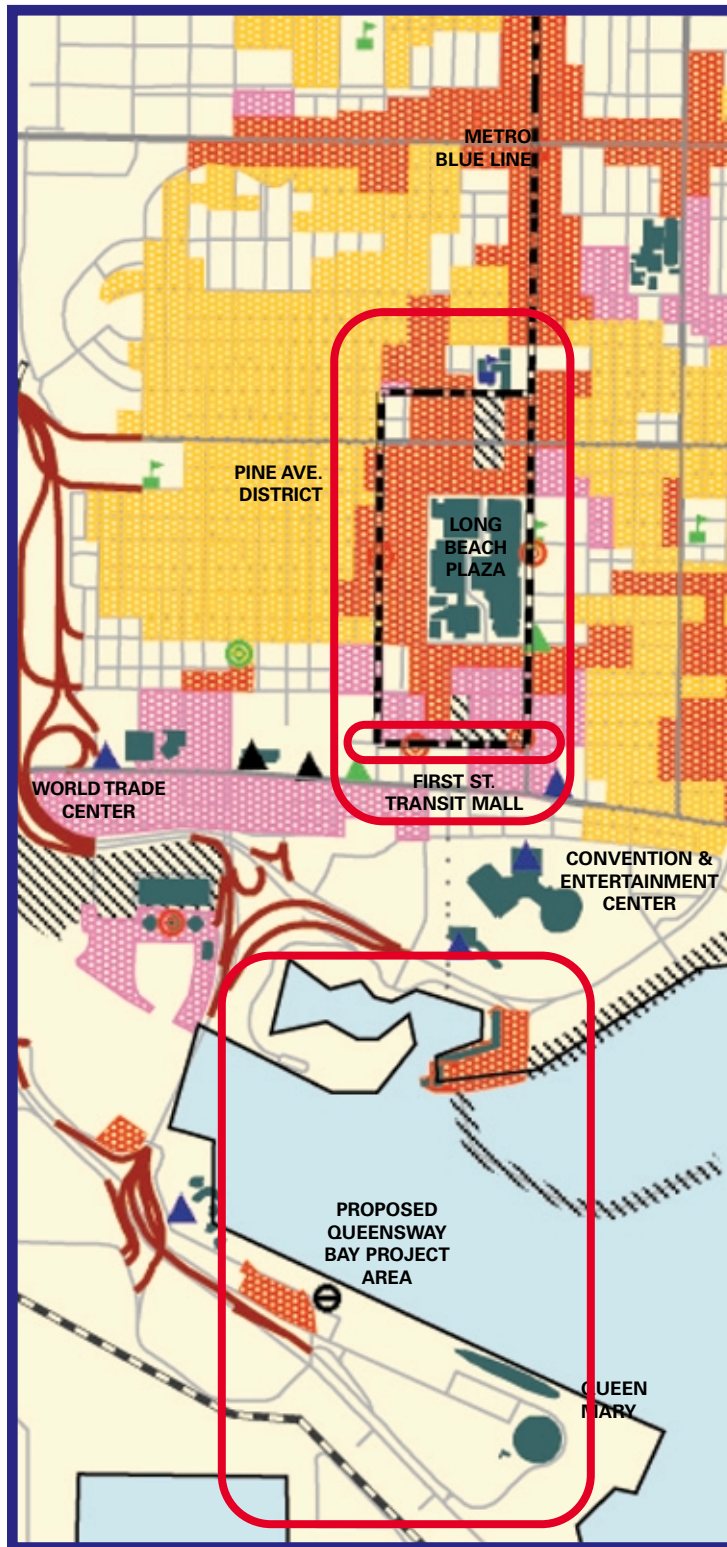
The Bikestation's \$230,000 initial cost was funded primarily by a federal transportation grant with supplementary funding provided by the MTA, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the City of Long Beach, and private enterprise.

The project received a "Community Design Award" from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Its bold, user friendly design has been recognized as a public work of art that enhances the quality of life in the entire Downtown area.

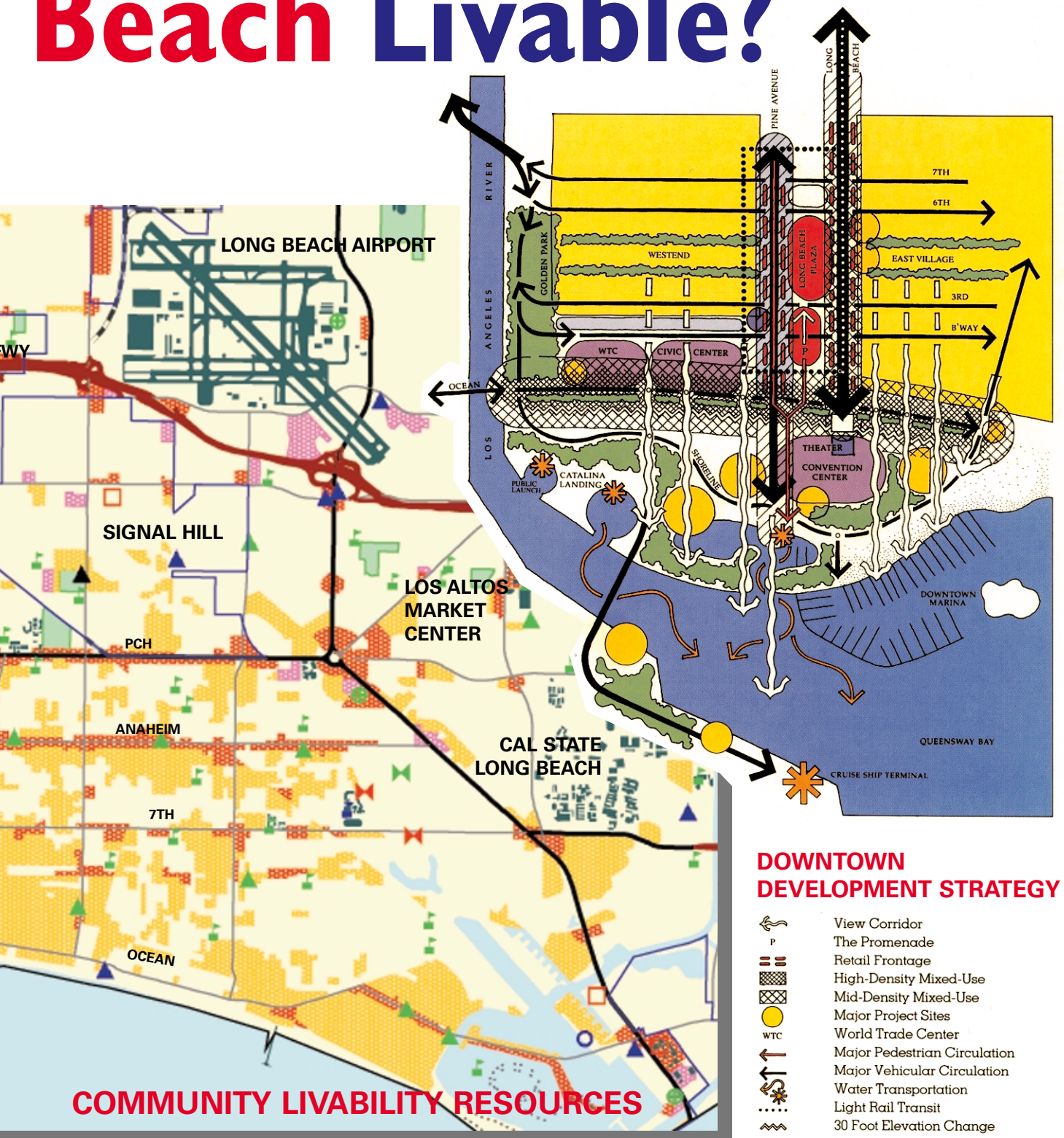
BIKESTATION[®]

What makes Long



**DOWNTOWN
REDEVELOPMENT
& QUEENSWAY BAY
PROJECT AREA**

Beach Livable?



Map Credits: Thomas Bros. Maps, SCAG, City of Long Beach



Pine Square mixed-use development

History: Originally developed as the historic retail core of Downtown Long Beach, Pine Avenue was a homogenous corridor of low- to mid-rise buildings dating from the early 1900's. It has fought its way back from decline to a new prosperity in the 1990's through an effective and wide-ranging redevelopment and marketing campaign.

Many of the formerly beautiful and well-detailed facades were covered with oversized signs during the 1940's and 1950's, when Pine Avenue was still a bustling shopping, business and civic center. The opening of the Lakewood Mall in the 1950's, however, quickly drew Long Beach patrons away from the Downtown. Adult movie theaters, tattoo parlors and taverns catering to military servicemen began to locate in the area, and vacant storefronts became a common sight.

Not lost in this decline, however, were the elements that would eventually facilitate Pine Avenue's rebirth: **its intimate scale, continuous frontages, narrow storefronts, large display windows and closely-spaced entrances.** These pedestrian-friendly features characterize the successful specialty-retail and entertainment hub for which it would become known once again.

The rebirth of Pine Avenue began in the early 1980's with an aggressive, multi-point program to address the deteriorated and outdated condition of the area. A Downtown Redevelopment Project Area, consisting of 421 acres, was adopted in 1975. By 1980, a plan was being implemented to assemble blighted properties for sale to developers, as well as to provide land write-downs and other financial incentives to attract new development.

Major Accomplishments: Efforts to rejuvenate Pine Avenue over the last two decades have been spectacularly successful. In the 1980's the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency **invested \$100 million in the project area that, in turn, stimulated over \$3 billion in private sector investment.** Accomplishments included the construction of over three million square feet of office space, the construction of the Long Beach Plaza shopping mall, creation of a 30-acre park along the shoreline, construction of four hotels containing over 1,600 rooms, and development of a world-class Convention and Entertainment Center. These efforts created over **15,000 permanent jobs** in the Downtown, establishing the shopper base that led the successful Pine Avenue revitalization.

After investing a decade in building the foundation for a Downtown renaissance, the City's Redevelopment Agency began to shift resources away from the "bricks and mortar" programs of the 1980's, towards improvement of the existing retail core. Emphasis was placed on encouraging a wide range of retail opportunities, enhancing the physical retail environment through a coherent urban design, targeting limited public expenditures, and actively involving owners and tenants and other stakeholders in the program's success.

The first major development that resulted was the Pine Square project, a mixed-use development comprised of **142 apartments, 7,000 square feet of retail uses, and a 16-screen cineplex**. The Agency assembled land, selected the developer, provided the offsite parking, contributed to construction financing, and assisted in securing permanent financing. Opened in December 1992, the cinema draws an average of 22,000 patrons weekly, stimulating restaurant and retail trade.

Continuing Success Story: The era of "Main Street" shopping has returned to Pine Avenue, which is re-establishing itself as a premier regional shopping and entertainment center. Retail traffic is increasing and retailers compete for the prime locations. Diners, moviegoers and **shoppers now spend an estimated \$343 million annually**, in a pedestrian-friendly and safe environment. Despite its success, Pine Avenue is still a "work in progress." The Long Beach Redevelopment Agency continues to guide the development of Pine Avenue, and will continue to do so into the next century.



Tourists flock, locals gawk on Pine Avenue



Pine Avenue sidewalk dining and night life



It has become a place where art galleries, night clubs and outdoor cafés merge seamlessly with national retailers and local merchants. The combination of contemporary and historic architecture provides a vibrant blending of the modern and trendy with the elegant and refined.

Pine Avenue Action Plan



The Pine Avenue retail district is at the center of the revitalized Downtown. The guiding hand behind the success of the Pine Avenue district is the Downtown Planned Development Ordinance, which contains important building and development standards. The intent is to build the Downtown into a multi-purpose activity center of regional significance that is attractive and exciting during the daylight and evening hours. Planning efforts focus on connecting various Downtown districts into a cohesive whole that is coordinated with the redevelopment of the near-by shoreline. The preservation of historic buildings, creation of more recreational open space, and development of a pedestrian focus are all important objectives.

To ensure the continued success of Pine Avenue, a 12-point Action Plan was developed that calls for such activities as:

- Financial incentives for national and regional tenants deemed compatible with the desired tenant mix
- Pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements including lighting, landscaping, expanded sidewalks and street furniture
- A Downtown Guide Program in which uniformed, radio-equipped personnel act as "City Ambassadors" providing information and a sense of security to shoppers
- A Vendor Program that ensures that street vendors complement rather than compete with area retailers and restaurants
- A Downtown Signage Program that provides clear, attractive signs to direct pedestrians and automobile travelers
- A Parking Management Program that coordinates the use of Downtown parking resources and provides free validations to area customers
- A Percent for Public Art Program that requires that a percentage of development costs be devoted to the creation of Downtown art work using local artists when possible
- An Outdoor Sidewalk Dining Program that encourages sidewalk dining

HOME Investment Partnership

HUD's HOME Investment Partnership Program currently provides needed housing rehabilitation resources within the Downtown Redevelopment Area, as well as adjacent neighborhoods. The City has recently been awarded a HUD HOME ownership zone designation. To stimulate development in this area, and turn renters into home-owners, the City has been awarded a \$1.9 million grant. This grant is expected to spark about \$27.5 million in public and private investment in the recently designated American Marketplace Zone, as well as the Wrigley Neighborhood Zone, that extend north from the Downtown.



A Vision for Housing



The Blackstone

The Blackstone is one of Long Beach's historic Downtown landmarks, originally constructed in 1922. Located on Ocean Boulevard near the Long Beach Convention Center, the former Blackstone Hotel had fallen into disrepair and deteriorated into a vagrancy hotel catering primarily to transients. In 1993, the hotel was substantially renovated and upgraded to provide permanent, affordable units including 86 studio, and 20 one-bedroom units. The Blackstone is now an asset to the Downtown instead of a liability. Its renovation and conversion was accomplished using \$847,000 from the HUD Rental Rehab Program, \$319,000 local redevelopment funds, and \$537,000 private funds.

Queensway Bay

History: In 1992, when the Walt Disney Company announced it would not proceed with the proposed Disney Sea theme park in the Long Beach Harbor, the City decided to develop its own attraction under the guidance of a citizen advisory committee. Approved by the City Council in March 1994, the plan was unanimously endorsed by the California Coastal Commission. The **300-acre project** comprises 460,000 square foot entertainment and retail development, 900 hotel rooms, a 157,000 square foot aquarium, docks for 50 commercial vessels, and 69 acres of parkland.

Queensway Bay will be a source of pride for local residents, an attraction for 15 million Southern Californians, and a draw for the 37 million tourists visiting the region each year.

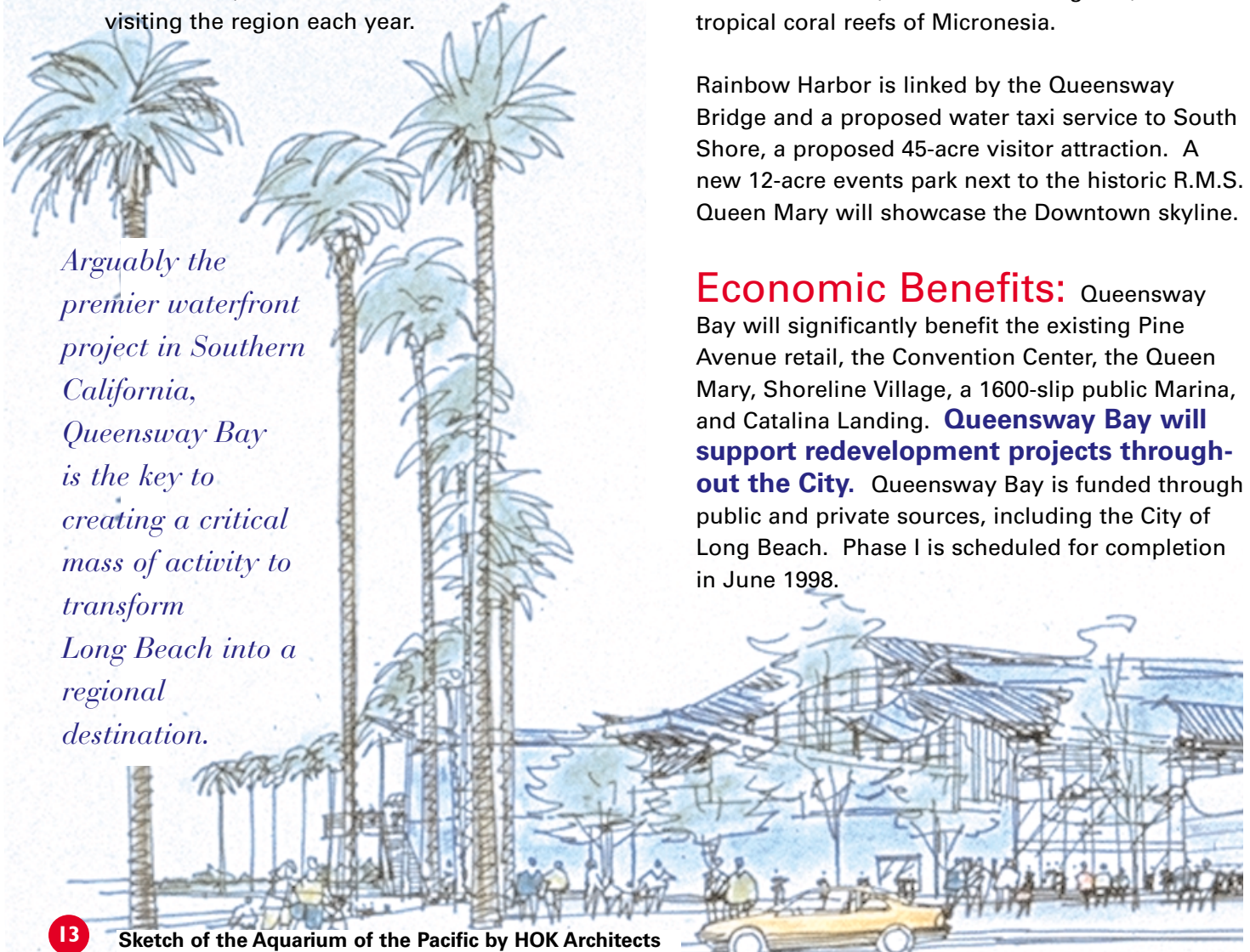
Arguably the premier waterfront project in Southern California, Queensway Bay is the key to creating a critical mass of activity to transform Long Beach into a regional destination.

Rainbow Harbor: The focus of Queensway Bay is Rainbow Harbor, homeport to historic ships and commercial recreational vessels. A 2,000-foot long multi-level esplanade with retail, entertainment and recreational attractions will be a contemporary re-creation of the historic Long Beach Rainbow Pier, providing continuous daytime and evening activity.

The **Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific** is the largest building attraction in Rainbow Harbor. The \$117 million aquarium will provide indoor and outdoor exhibits. It will be the only one in the U.S. to explore the undersea wonders of the Pacific Ocean, ranging from the temperate Southern California waters, to the cold Bering Sea, and the tropical coral reefs of Micronesia.

Rainbow Harbor is linked by the Queensway Bridge and a proposed water taxi service to South Shore, a proposed 45-acre visitor attraction. A new 12-acre events park next to the historic R.M.S. Queen Mary will showcase the Downtown skyline.

Economic Benefits: Queensway Bay will significantly benefit the existing Pine Avenue retail, the Convention Center, the Queen Mary, Shoreline Village, a 1600-slip public Marina, and Catalina Landing. **Queensway Bay will support redevelopment projects throughout the City.** Queensway Bay is funded through public and private sources, including the City of Long Beach. Phase I is scheduled for completion in June 1998.



Located in the state's largest Enterprise Zone, and in a Los Angeles Revitalization Zone, a variety of financial incentives are available including sales tax credits, hiring credits, net-loss carry forward, recycling credits, and interest deductions for lenders. The project has received federal financial support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Economic Development Administration, and Army Corps of Engineers. At full build-out the plan will create 3,575 permanent jobs and \$275,000,000 in regional benefits.

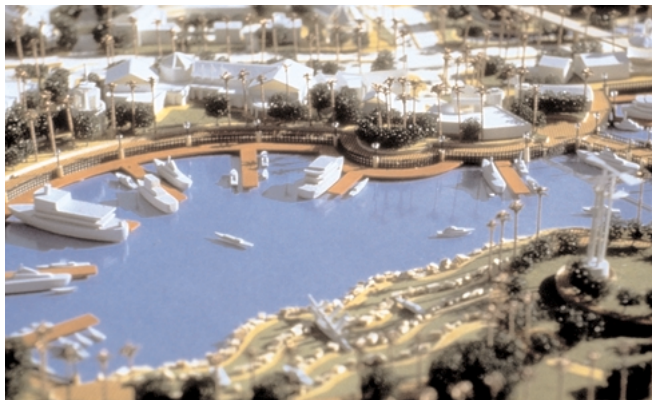
Environmental Benefits: The South Coast Air Quality Management District is funding the construction of electric vehicle charging stations at the Convention Center, and at the Aquarium of the Pacific. These stations will encourage the use of alternative fuel vehicles.

The Queensway Bay development will be linked to other Downtown activity centers by the City's Runabout shuttle. Linked attractions include **Shoreline Village, Catalina Landing, the Convention Center, the Queen Mary**, Ocean Boulevard hotels, and Pine Avenue. Runabout routes will be restructured between Queensway Bay and Downtown, and renamed "The Passport."

Queensway Bay will provide an interconnected system of walkways and bikeways. In addition, these will be connected via Pine Avenue to the Transit Mall, which is about a half-mile from Shoreline Village, and three-quarters of a mile from the Aquarium. Visitors arriving by bus or rail may access the attractions by walking while those bringing bikes on the Blue Line, or renting at the Bikestation, can cycle around Queensway Bay.



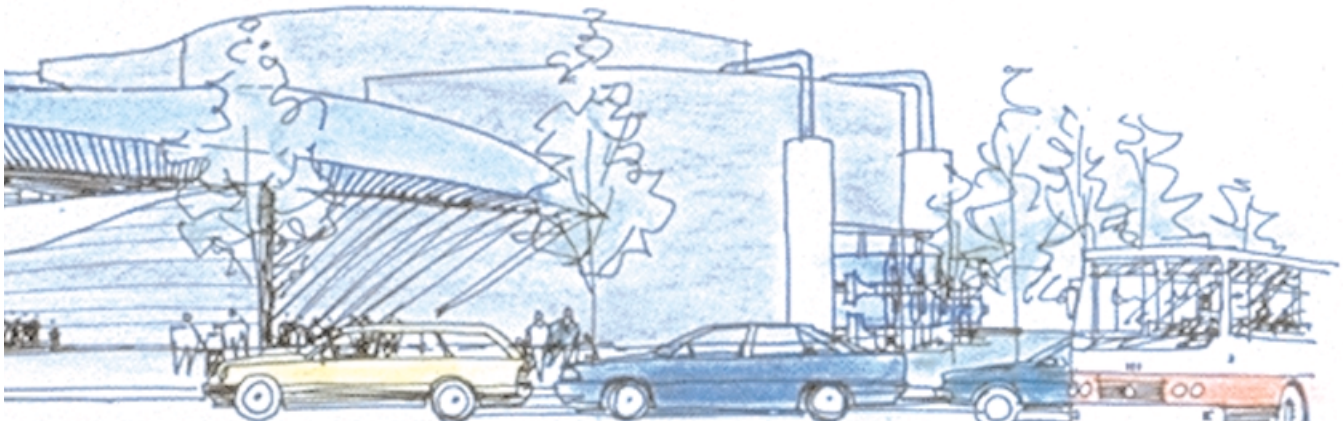
Illustrative plan by Ehrenkrantz & Eckstut Architects



Architectural model of Rainbow Harbor



Aerial view of Queensway Bay construction including Rainbow Harbor and the Aquarium of the Pacific



Lessons to be Learned

- ✓ Redevelopment efforts should **capitalize on the natural assets** of an area, such as Long Beach's central coastal location, pleasant climate, historically unique buildings, abundant recreational opportunities, superior transportation access, and a modern, City-owned port
- ✓ To take advantage of improving economic conditions, it is prudent to have an **overall economic recovery strategy** that can quickly build upon a jurisdiction's assets
- ✓ **Coordination of land use and transportation planning** in redevelopment areas such as Downtown Long Beach, can markedly contribute to the livability and environmental quality of local communities
- ✓ Architectural elements of deteriorated but **historically unique buildings can provide a sense of identity** and stimulate community pride
- ✓ **New architectural motifs can be compatible** with, and enhance the appeal of, existing historic structures, such as on Long Beach's Pine Avenue
- ✓ If spent wisely, targeted **public "seed money" can, in turn, generate private investments**
- ✓ The planning of **separate redevelopment projects can be coordinated** to work together in a cohesive manner
- ✓ A **major tourist attraction** such as Queensway Bay **can enhance existing attractions** by drawing a substantial number of regional and international tourists
- ✓ **Efficient public transportation** can play a key role in providing **regional access** to redevelopment projects, and in linking separate attractions in an **environmentally friendly** manner
- ✓ A **variety of transportation options** provided in a single area, such as Long Beach's First Street **Transit Mall**, can greatly enhance the livability of surrounding communities
- ✓ **An effective housing program** is essential to create a sense of community Downtown, support transit investments, and promote a balanced mix of land uses

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